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SEIU 1199NE
Laverne Hatcher
Hartford, CT

Before the Appropriations Committee

Good Afternoon Senator Osten, Representative Walker, and members of the Appropriations Committee. My name is Laverne Hatcher, I live in Hartford, CT, and I've worked as a Direct Support Associate at Sunrise Northeast for 8 years. I come before you today to testify in support of fully funding group homes in Connecticut.

I love my work because it brightens up my day, to brighten up my individuals' life. I work with individuals who reside at the hospital for special care. I also work at a group home where I assist the ladies with their day to day routines. On a daily basis I pass medication, bring individuals to recreation therapy, assist with personal hygiene, and even cooking. Sometimes, I can even take them grocery shopping, and bring them back and forth to work-helping them live a normal life as much as possible.

There is an individual that I take care of who is wheelchair bound. When I first started working there, he had limited capabilities. The care that I provided allowed me to teach him his alphabets, painting, and doing puzzles. I had to be specially trained to deal with his needs. Specifically, when it came to taking him on outings to socialize.

Right now we suffer with low staffing, low wages, and a lack of supplies, all due to underfunding. We play such an important role in our clients' lives, yet we deal with so much stress and anxiety because of the wages we earn. I constantly worry about not making ends meet. Not being able to pay my bills. I know my work is valuable, but when I work as hard as I do to barely get by I feel undervalued and disrespected.

The issues in group homes can be addressed with proper levels of funding. With more money we can hire more staff, raise wages, and ensure we have the supplies we need to do our jobs. Proper funding will also ensure our individuals can continue to receive the services they need. Please do the right thing, and fund group homes like mine.

Thank you.